OBITUARY

Obituary

Henry Huber Sherk MD (1930–2012)

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Henry Huber Sherk (Fig. 1), professor of surgery at Drexel University College of Medicine, and an early innovator in cervical spine surgery, died at his home in Philadelphia on April 9, 2012 following a battle with cancer, according to the Cervical Spine Research Society newsletter. He was 81 years old.

Sherk was an esteemed teacher, researcher, and clinician. As professor of surgery and chief of orthopaedic surgery at the Medical College of Pennsylvania, which later became Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia, Sherk guided a wide range of research projects for his residents. He co-wrote and edited *Lasers in Orthopedics*, the definitive textbook on the subject in 1990. Sherk wrote and edited several other books and was author or co-author of more than 200 peer-reviewed papers. In 2008, he published his last book, *Getting It Straight: A History of American Orthopaedics*.

An eloquent speaker who often embedded subtle humor and prickly barbs in unexpected places, Sherk provided regular lectures, as well as surgically oriented talks to

Fig. 1 Following his retirement from surgery, Sherk continued to provide lectures to medical students while working on his numerous writing projects.

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medical students. His mastery of the English language and broad knowledge of history resulted in many engaging conversations with his colleagues, residents, and students. Many residents have memories of visiting him at his family farm along the Cohansey River in southern New Jersey, and going for walks in his arboretum. He routinely regaled them with the common name and Latin designation for each of the trees. He also enjoyed researching New Jersey history and medical history.

Clinically, Sherk was an accomplished spine surgeon, but he also had a general practice that included total joint

replacement, arthroscopy, and trauma surgery. He took great pride in his efforts that led to the establishment of a Level 1 trauma center at Medical College of Pennsylvania, and he took regular trauma calls there until the hospital closed in 2004.

Sherk conducted a weekly conference at which all operative trauma cases were thoroughly discussed as to the indications and outcomes, often accompanied by lively discussion, particularly in controversial cases. This conference was a central focus in Dr. Sherk's teaching mission.

Inducted as a member of The Association of Bone and Joint Surgeons® in 2005, Sherk was also a founding member and president of the Cervical Spine Research Society and a member of the American Orthopaedic

Association since 1994. He also served as president of the Camden County Medical Society.

Combining his passion for teaching with his love of the English language, Sherk worked as an associate editor of the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*. Following his retirement from surgery, Sherk continued to provide lectures to medical students while he worked on his numerous writing projects.

Henry Sherk loved his work, but he loved his family and friends even more. His gentleness, kindness, and warmth drew others to him. He was a devoted husband for 47 years to his wife Lea Carson Sherk, and an adoring father to his daughters Katherine Simons, Mary Sherk Shimer MD, and Julia Logan MD.